

GEORGE FRANKS

DRAWER 13A

PERSONALITY

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# The Assassination of Abraham Lincoln

George Francis

Excerpts from newspapers and other  
sources

From the files of the  
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

The Saturday Evening Post, Feb. 12, 1944 -  
Page 82 -

"New Light on Lincoln's Death" -  
What happened on the tragic night of April 14,  
1865, after Booth shot Lincoln at Ford's  
Theater in Washington? Here is a previously  
unpublished eyewitness account of Lincoln's  
last hours, recently discovered among some  
family papers by Doctor Josephine Hemen-  
way Kenyon of New York City. It was in  
the form of a letter by her great-uncle  
George Francis, who happened to be living  
across the street from the theater at the time  
of the assassination. "The President died  
in our house," Dr. Francis wrote to a niece,  
"and we witnessed that heart-breaking scene.  
At the time of the murder, we were about  
getting into bed. I had changed my  
clothes and shut off the gas, when we heard  
such a terrible scream that we ran to the  
front window to see what it could mean.  
We saw a great commotion in the theater -  
some running in, others hurrying out -  
and we could hear hundreds of voices  
mingled in the greatest confusion.  
Presently we heard some one say 'The  
President is shot!' I hurried on my  
clothes and ran out into the street as



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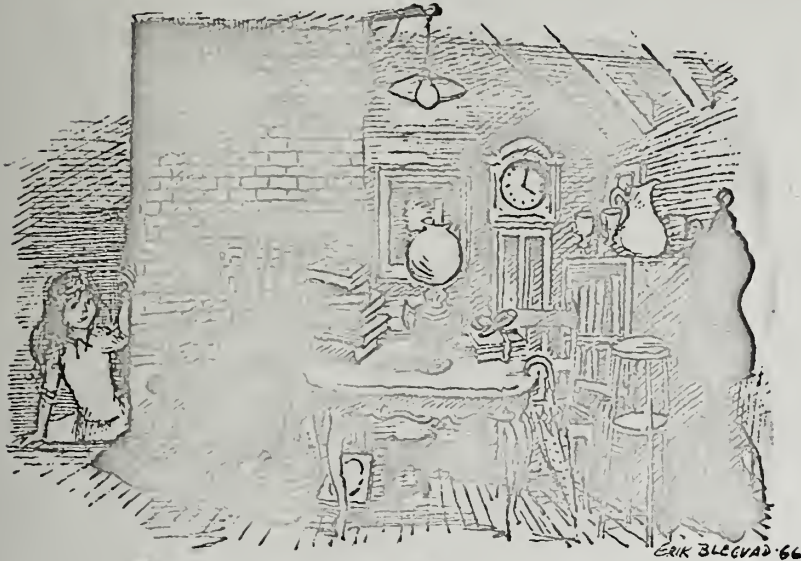
They brought him out of the theater.  
Poor Man! I could see, as the gas light  
fell upon his face, that it was deathly  
pale, and that his eyes were closed. They  
carried him ~~across the street~~ out into  
the street and into our house and  
passed on to the little room in the  
back of the building, at the end of the  
hall. Mrs. Lincoln came in soon  
after accompanied by Major Rathbone  
and Miss Harris. She was perfectly frantic.  
"Where is my husband? Where is my  
husband?" she cried, wringing her  
hands in <sup>great</sup> anguish. As she approached  
his bedside, she bent over him kiss-  
ing him, again and again, exclaiming  
"How can it be so? Do speak to me!"  
Secretary Stanton, Secretary Wells and  
all the members of the Cabinet except  
Secretary Seward came in and re-  
mained all night. Our front parlor  
was given up to Mrs. Lincoln and her  
friends. The back parlor - our bed-  
room was occupied by Secretary  
Stanton. Judge Carter held an infor-  
mal court there, and it was full of

people. Mrs. Lincoln went in to see her husband occasionally. Robert Lincoln was with her. Reverend Dr. Gurley was there and made a prayer by the bedside of the President and they in the parlor with Mrs. Lincoln. Mr. Lincoln was insensible from the moment he was shot. As he lay on the bed, the only sign of life was his breathing. About two o'clock he began to breathe harder and with more and more difficulty until he died. A Cabinet meeting was then held in our back-parlor and soon after most of the people left. About two hours after he died, the President was carried up to the President's home.

That was all, except that when Mrs. Lincoln left, her bonnet could not be found and she had to "borrow one from Mrs. Francis". This mystery was subsequently solved by the niece who received the letter given above. She learned that "some enterprising young men who had rooms in the house," had seen Mrs. Lincoln's bonnet lying on the bed, and reasoning among themselves that Mrs. Lincoln would never have use for it - took it & hid it up for



The old things that pass as household clutter can tell a fascinating story of a family's past



## Nobody Cares About Grandfather's Clock but Grandma

Condensed from NEW HAMPSHIRE PROFILES DOROTHY VAN ARK

It's too bad people don't save things anymore. Houses are built without attics, and those wonderful, deep, dark closets beneath the stairs for storing treasures belong to the past. Families move so often that nonessentials get weeded out. Children today can grow up and leave home without ever knowing the look and the feel of something really old from their own ancestors. Not in our family, though! We had Aunt Josephine.

Aunt Josephine lived to be 84, and

she never disposed of a thing if she could help it. She came from a long line of savers, and she saved everything *they* ever saved. As Dr. Josephine Hemenway Kenyon, one of the earliest women M.D.'s in the country, she was a baby doctor who helped publicize "T.L.C." But she lavished just as much tender loving care on objects as on people. For the last seven years of her life she lived with a huge loom in her bedroom. It wasn't that she ever did any weaving. There simply wasn't room for it anyplace else in the house and, as she said, "I can't part with that! It came from Aunt Helen McLeod."

When the man from the bank came to make the appraisal after she was gone, he viewed the tiers of books crowding the ceiling, the shelves across the windows filled with knickknacks and glass, the relatives hanging shoulder to shoulder on every wall. "Whew!" he let out softly. "She certainly was cumulative!"

That was the word for Aunt Josephine. Along with Great-Grandfather's mustache cup and the curly-maple table, she saved old documents, pictures, clothing and drawerfuls of old lace. These are the things that explain why professionals are so often called in by heirs to dispose of estates. But our family knew that no professional could judge the value of those four little wooden bears Grandfather brought from Berne, Switzerland, in 1892. They had no real value except to

those of us who remembered seeing them on the parlor mantel of the old Missouri homestead. That's why we decided to do the job ourselves.

We started by taking the junk from the garage to the dump. Unwanted pieces from the house then went to the garage. That way we could still reconsider before letting anything go for good. We learned how important this was one day when a friend looking over the discards in the garage gasped, "Why, that's not a beat-up old bedspread! That's a Colonial coverlet, a genuine homespun piece!" Another visitor dug out a heavily tarnished candlestick and cried, "That's Tiffany brass! It's even signed on the bottom."

After that we took no chances. We asked a friend who was an authority on antiques to go through the house and advise us on values. A picture in the hall caught her eye at once. It was Aunt Josephine, round-cheeked and bright-eyed at the age of four, surrounded by her dolls. "Could any of these still be around?" she asked. "Old dolls are collectors' items these days." We looked through drawers and closets, delved under piles of patchwork quilts, tablecloths and worn-out bureau covers. Finally we came upon some old round-topped trunks in the basement. There were the dolls, cradled comfortably in the yellowing folds of Great-Grandmother's satin wedding dress.

Gently I uncovered one after an-

other as my friend gasped in delight. "Why, that one is over 100 years old. You can tell by the flat-heeled shoes. And this one is a Chase Stockingette. What a find!"

But it wasn't just the treasures we uncovered that brought us pleasure. It was the personal contact with the past. Pinned onto the old clothing in those trunks were little notes like this one, written in my grandmother's flowery hand: "This christening dress was made by my mother when I was a baby. I was born June 7, 1852. Ida Eliza Hemenway." There were also old letters, such as one from my great-grandfather. "My Dear Wife," he wrote. "I rejoice that you are enjoying your stay in St. Louis but I long for your return. It is cold between the sheets at night when you are gone." Human touches like this make people seem real, even after 100 years.

Some letters had historical value. One was written in 1865 by Cousin George Francis, who rented rooms in Washington, D.C., across from the Ford Theater. "The President died in our house," he wrote to his niece, "and we witnessed that heart-breaking scene. Huldah and I were about getting into bed when we heard such a terrible scream that we ran to the front window. We saw a great commotion in the theater and presently heard someone cry, 'The President has been shot!' I hurried on my clothes and ran across the street as they brought him out of the theater. Poor man, I could see as the gaslight fell upon his face that it

was deathly pale and his eyes were closed. A young man standing on our front steps said, 'Bring him in here.' Mrs. Lincoln came in soon after. 'Where is my husband?' she cried, wringing her hands in the greatest anguish." The letter goes on to recount the hours until "the President's body was carried up to the President's house," and tells of the somber days that followed.

Museums and libraries are hungry for this kind of material. Mrs. Enid Thompson, librarian at the Colorado State Historical Society Library in Denver, showed me the library's air-conditioned fireproof vault, where the papers of the Unsinkable Molly Brown, among others, are tenderly filed in acid-free folders inside acid-free archive boxes. "Donating old diaries and letters to libraries can be a lasting memorial to a family," Mrs. Thompson says.

Did we donate our letters and documents to a library? No, saving is a family trait. We kept almost everything and, in sorting over the things to divide among the family, I came to some conclusions about saving.

For one thing, I shall save nothing unless I can keep it properly labeled and organized. Aunt Josephine's stamp collection taught me that. She saved just about every stamp that ever came to her. "I'm keeping that stamp-sorting job for my old age," she would say with a laugh, but that day never came. We found stamps all over the house.

My forebears also taught me to write names and dates on the back of

all photos. Aunt Josephine even added comments: "Seneca Hemenway, father's father. Obviously his teeth didn't fit. I remember him like this." In an earlier day, one determined ancestor had her portrait painted holding a blank card in her hand, then wrote on the card herself, "When deprived of my presence, forget not my precepts. Shun vice. Love virtue. Eliza Pulliam Shackelford. 1839."

My grandmother kept a remarkable record of Aunt Josephine's medical training at Johns Hopkins in the early 1900's. She saved every letter her daughter wrote home and then tied the envelopes together according to the dates. She also prepared a photo album showing the early Hopkins campus and its famous teachers. There were the Big Four who helped shape modern medicine: Sir William Osler examining a patient, Dr. William Stewart Halsted operating and Drs. Howard A. Kelley and William H. Welch.

Seeing this made me realize how much meaning even the simplest records may have 50 years from now. So, true to my heritage, I'm saving everything that can record my own family's life and times. I've bought a big old secondhand file cabinet for keeping the material organized until I have time to paste it neatly into albums.

But what about things too bulky to be kept in a file cabinet or album? One solution struck me as I was going through Aunt Josephine's whatnot cabinet. I came upon a miniature guitar the size of my hand. It

had come from Italy, and I can remember as a little girl being allowed to hold it in Aunt Alice's apartment.

"Someday that will be yours," Aunt Alice told me, and I used to dream of the day when I could stroke its polished surface whenever I wanted. But I was away at school when Aunt Alice died, and I never knew what happened to the little guitar until I came upon it in Aunt Josephine's cabinet.

I took it out gently and stroked it once again, realizing, "Now it can be mine." But the magic was gone. I didn't really care anymore. So I've decided that if there are belongings my young relatives really covet, they shall have them *now*, today!

Other things are waiting for the grandchildren I hope to have someday. The Lincoln letter has been photostated so they can take it to school to share with their classmates on February 12. There are also some prized dolls, a few special dresses like Grandmother's christening robe. There are letters and pictures and old newspapers. These our grandchildren and great-grandchildren will be able to touch and read, instead of peering at them through the glass of a museum cabinet.

A sign in an antique shop in New England reads, "Nobody cares about Grandfather's clock but Grandma." I hope such indifference is passing. When nobody cares except Grandma, a family denies itself the pleasure of knowing real live ancestors and misses the pride of its own special heritage.



Van Ark

October 19, 1966

Miss Dorothy Van Ark  
Author of Article in October 1966 Reader's Digest  
The Reader's Digest  
Pleasantville, New York

Dear Miss Van Ark:

I have read with interest your article "Nobody Cares About Grandfathers Clock but Grandma." I am particularly interested in the letter written by George Francis in 1865 giving an account of Lincoln's assassination.

I note that you have had the letter photostated. Would it be possible for me to purchase a photostat? We would like to include this letter in our assassination file.

Hoping to hear from you, I remain

Yours sincerely,

R. Gerald McMurtry

RGM/cmr  
Enclosure

Jessie Van Arck

Dear Mr. McMurty:

Here is the Lincoln letter that you requested after reading my article, "Nobody Cares About Grandfather's Clock." I left off the last two pages as they were personal and uninteresting. I did enclose two items which were always kept with the original letter which is owned by my Uncle in Chicago, Mr. Charles F. Menenway.

The cost is \$2. I have enclosed an envelope for your convenience. I hope it is what you wanted.

Sincerely

Jessie Van Arck



Washington D C.  
May 5<sup>th</sup> 1865

Dear Josephine

Your letter of last week, and the one in January reached me in due time - I have been on the point of writing to you for some time back, but we have had so much excitement here - so much to occupy my attention, that it has seemed as though I must be in a dream, and I have hardly known what I was about. The fall of Richmond, the surrender of Lee's army, and the assassination of the President is all that has been thought of here. The President died in our home, and we witnessed that heartrending scene. I shall never forget that awful night, following too, as it did one of such general

was to go to the theatre and see the  
man who had been shot in the  
head. For a week before the whole  
city had been crazy over the fall of  
Richmond and the surrender of Lee's army.  
Only the night before, the city was illu-  
minated, and though it had been  
illuminated several times just before  
this time, it was more general, and was  
the grandest affair of the kind that ever  
took place in Washington. At the time  
of the murder we were about getting into  
bed. Huldah had got into bed. I had  
changed my clothes and shut off the  
gas, when we heard such a terrible scream  
that we ran to the front window to see what it  
could mean. We saw a great commotion  
in the Theatre - some running in, others hurrying  
out, and we could hear hundreds of  
voices mingled in the greatest confusion.  
Presently we heard some one say "the President  
is shot", when I hurried on my clothes and  
ran out, across the street, as they brought him  
out of the Theatre. Poor man! I could see



as the gas light fell upon his face, that it was deathly pale, and that his eyes were closed. They carried him on out into the street, and towards our steps. The door was open and a young man belonging to the house standing on the steps told them to bring him in there, expecting to have him laid upon our bed. But the door to that room being fastened they passed on to a little room in the back building at the end of the hall. Fuldah remained looking out of the window until she saw them bringing him up our steps, when she ran to get on her clothes. Mrs. Lincoln came in soon after, accompanied by Major Rathbun and Miss Harris. - She was perfectly frantic. "Where is my husband! Where is my husband!" she cried, wringing her hands in the greatest anguish. As she approached his bedside she bent over him, kissing him again and again, exclaiming "How can it be so? Do speak to me!" Secretary Stanton

Secretary Wells, and all the members of the  
Cabinet except Secretary Seward come in and  
remained all night - Also Charles Sumner,  
Judge Carter, General Auger, General Meigs,  
two or three Surgeons, and a good many others -  
Our front parlor was given up to Mrs. Lincoln  
and her friends - The back parlor (our bedroom)  
was occupied by Secretary Stanton. <sup>He wrote</sup> ~~in writing~~  
his despatches <sup>there</sup> during the night - Judge Carter  
held an informal Court there, and it was  
full of people - Mrs. Lincoln went into see  
her husband occasionally - Robert Lincoln was with  
her - Rev. Dr. Gurley was there and made a prayer by  
the bedside of the President, and then in the Parlor with Mrs.  
Lincoln - Mr. Lincoln was insensible from the first  
and there was no hope from the moment he was shot - As he  
lay on the bed, the only sign of life he exhibited was his  
breathing - About two o'clock he began to breathe ~~harder~~  
and he breathed with more and more difficulty until  
he died - After he died Dr. Gurley made a short prayer  
over him and then prayed again with Mrs. Lincoln in  
the parlor - ~~After he died~~ <sup>After</sup> Cabinet meeting <sup>was held</sup>  
in our back parlor, and soon after, the mark of the flesh  
left - Mrs. Lincoln went soon and in about two hours  
after he died the President <sup>was carried</sup> <sup>up to the President's Chamber</sup> - We saw  
him the last time up in the Capitol the day before he was  
carried away - Things now are resuming their usual  
appearance, but business seems to keep very quiet. There  
is not much doing here in that line - I think I shall  
have plenty of time for a summer ramble -



# Union Ticket.

*For President,*

**ABRAHAM LINCOLN.**

*For Vice-President,*

**ANDREW JOHNSON.**

*For Electors for President and Vice President,*

John Dougherty.

William T. Hopkins.

Francis A. Hoffmann.

Franklin Blades.

Benjamin M. Prentiss.

James C. Conkling.

John V. Farwell.

William Walker.

Anson S. Miller.

Thomas W. Harris.

John V. Eustace.

Nathaniel M. McCurdy.

James S. Poage.

Henry S. Baker.

John I. Bennett.

Z. S. Clifford.

*For Governor,*

**RICHARD J. OGLESBY.**

*For Lieutenant Governor,*

**WILLIAM BROSS.**

*For Secretary of State,*

**SHARON TYNDALE.**

*For Auditor of Public Accounts,*

**O. H. MINER.**

*For State Treasurer,*

**JAMES H. BEVERIDGE.**

*For Superintendent of Public Instruction,*

**NEWTON BATEMAN.**

*For Representative in Congress for the State at Large,*

**SAMUEL W. MOULTON.**

*For State Attorney,*

**CHARLES H. REED.**

*For Clerk of Circuit Court,*

**WILLIAM L. CHURCH.**

*For Sheriff,*

**JOHN A. NELSON.**

*For Coroner,*

**DR. WILLIAM WAGNER.**

*For Representative in Congress, 1st District,*

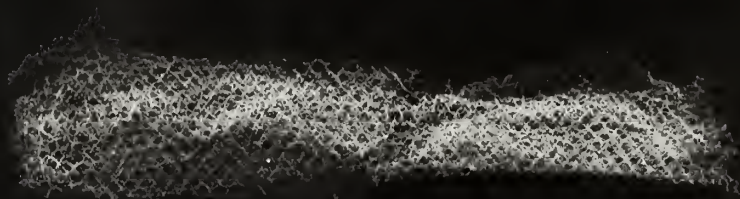
**JOHN WENTWORTH.**

*For Representatives, 6th District,*

**GEORGE STRONG.**

**ALEXANDER F. STEVENSON.**

Lace taken from the  
bonnet of Mrs Lincoln  
on the night of the 14<sup>th</sup>  
of April 1865





Washington, D. C.

May 5th, 1865

Dear Josephine:

Your letter of last week and the one in Germany reached me in due time. I have been on the point of writing to you for sometime back, but we have so much excitement here - so much to occupy my attention, that it has seemed as though I must be in a dream, and I have hardly known what I was about. The fall of Richmond, the surrender of Lee's army, and the assassination of the President is all that has been thought of here. The President died in our house, and we witnessed that heartrending scene. I shall forget that awful night, following too, as it did one of such general rejoicing. For a week before the whole city had been crazy over the fall of Richmond and the surrender of Lee's army. Only the night before, the city was illuminated and though it had been illuminated several times just before this time, it was more general, and was the grandest affair of the kind that ever took place in Washington. At the time of the murder we were about getting into bed. Hulda had got into bed. I had changed my clothes and shut off the gas, when we heard such a terrible scream that we ran to the front window to see what it could mean. We saw a great commotion in the Theater - some running in, others hurrying out, and we could hear hundreds of voices mingled in the greatest confusion. Presently we heard someone say "the President is shot," when I hurried on my clothes and ran out across the street, as they brought him out of the Theater. Poor man! I could see as the gas light fell upon face, that it was deathly pale, and that his eyes were closed. They carried him on out into the street and toward our steps. The door was open and a young man belonging to the house standing on the steps told them to bring him in there, expecting to have him laid upon our bed. But the door to that room being fastened they passed on to a little room in the back building at the end of the hall. Hulda continued looking out of the window until she saw them bringing him up our steps when she ran to get on her clothes. Mrs. Lincoln came in soon after, accompanied by Major Rathburn and Miss Harris. She was perfectly frantic. "Where is my husband! Where is my husband!" she cried wringing her hands in the greatest anguish. As she

approached his bedside, she bent over him, kissing him again and again, exclaiming "How can it be so? Do speak to me!" Secretary Stanton, Secretary Wells, and all the members of the Cabinet except Secretary Seward came in and remained all night. Also Charles Sumner, Judge Carter (Cartter), General Augur, General Meigs, two or three Surgeons, and a good many others. Our front parlor was given up to Mrs. Lincoln and her friends. The back parlor (our bedroom) was occupied by Secretary Stanton. He wrote his dispatches there during the night. Judge Carter (Cartter) held an informal court there and it was full of people. Mrs. Lincoln went into see her husband occasionally. Robert Lincoln was with her. Rev. Dr. Gurley was there and made a prayer by the bedside of the President, and then in the Parlor with Mrs. Lincoln. Mr. Lincoln was insensible from the first and there was no hope from the moment he was shot. As he lay on the bed, the only sign of life he exhibited was his breathing. About two o'clock he began to breathe harder and he breathed with more and more difficulty until he died. After he died Dr. Gurley made a short prayer over him and then prayed again with Mrs. Lincoln in the parlor. A Cabinet meeting was then held in our back parlor, and soon after this most of the people left. Mrs. Lincoln went soon and in about two hours after he died the President was carried up to the President's House. We saw him the last time up in the Capitol the day before he was carried away. Things now are resuming their usual appearance, but business seems to keep very quiet. There is not much doing here in that line. I think I shall have plenty of time for a summer ramble.

Letter from George Francis to Josephine \_\_\_\_\_.





